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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 18 February 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am compelled to write to you today to draw your attention to the continuing condemnable use of excessive and lethal force by Israel, the occupying Power, against Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This has included indiscriminate force against innocent civilians, deliberately and callously carried out by the Israeli occupying forces. As we continue to grapple with the grave crisis prevailing in the Gaza Strip as a result of the occupying Power's illegal policies and practices and its continuing blockade, which has caused immeasurable suffering and hardship for the Palestinian civilian population, we must bring to your attention the occupying Power's relentless attempts to illegally colonize the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular East Jerusalem.

Yesterday, Thursday, 17 February 2011, Israeli occupying forces killed three Palestinian fishermen who were working with their nets on the shore near Beit Lahiya, north of Gaza City. The three fishermen, Jihad Khalaf, Tal'aat Al-Ruwagh and Ashraf Al-Qteifan, all in their twenties, were killed instantaneously by heavy gunfire from Israeli helicopters. Moreover, last week, Friday, 11 February 2011, another Palestinian was brutally killed in West Jerusalem. Hussam Al-Rweidi, 24 years of age, was stabbed to death by ultra-Orthodox Jews on his way back from work to his home in Occupied East Jerusalem. After he was pronounced dead, the occupying Power withheld his body from his family for a proper burial, only until his grieving family agreed to the terms placed by the occupying forces, such as forbidding them from conducting pre-burial religious prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Occupied East Jerusalem, as well as agreeing to bury him in the middle of night in the presence of a limited number of relatives. We condemn the killing of these innocent civilians, and we call for those responsible for these crimes to be held accountable. The international community must also unequivocally condemn these murders and call upon Israel to cease its use of excessive and indiscriminate force against the Palestinian people and force the occupying Power to bring the perpetrators of these crimes, whomever they may be, to justice.

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On another front, since our last letter to you, dated 28 January 2011 (A/ES-10/510-S/2011/42), Israel, the occupying Power, has not ceased its illegal colonization campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, there have been a number of provocative announcements made by the Israeli Government on its plans and intentions to further unlawfully confiscate and colonize Palestinian property and land. On 9 February 2011, the Israeli Government approved the construction of two buildings that will include 13 settlement units in Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Occupied East Jerusalem. Moreover, on 14 February 2011, Israeli occupying forces confiscated more than 33 dunnums of land and razed a one-dunnum area with more than 70 trees, including olive, apricot, almond and cypress trees, also in Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Occupied East Jerusalem. In addition to the razing and destruction of land, Israeli police also violently beat the 16-year-old son of the owner of the land, leaving him seriously injured. Also, on 14 February 2011, the Israeli Government approved the construction of another 120 settlement units in the illegal settlements of "Ramot Allon" and "Pisgat Ze'ev", both also in Occupied East Jerusalem. And, on 16 February 2011, Israeli media reported that Israeli occupying forces had announced a plan to relocate three of their military colleges in the northern Al-Jalil area to East Jerusalem.

Furthermore, throughout the period since our last letter, settler violence has continued unabated. On 14 February 2011, a number of Israeli settlers from "Bat Ain", an illegal settlement to the north of Beit Ummar village, north of Al-Khalil (Hebron), uprooted 250 olive seedlings from lands belonging to two Palestinian families from the nearby village of Safa. Israel, the occupying Power, bears full responsibility for the illegal presence and all the illegal actions of the settlers and we call upon the international community to apply the necessary pressure on the Israeli Government to immediately bring an end to the terror campaign being perpetuated by illegal settlers against the Palestinian civilian population and their properties under occupation.

The occupying Power's illegal colonization campaign is not only unlawful, constituting grave breaches of international law, violations of numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and total disrespect for obligations and commitments under the road map and other commitments made in the context of the Middle East peace process, but constitutes a major obstruction to the goal of a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the two-State solution. Indeed, as Israel continues its illegal confiscation of Palestinian land, construction and expansion of settlements and the transfer of more Israeli settlers to the Occupied Palestinian Territory in order to advance its attempts to illegally de facto annex more Palestinian land, the territorial contiguity and integrity of the Territory is being severely undermined and the prospects for achieving the two-State solution are becoming physically impossible.

The international community has a legal and moral obligation to take an unwavering stand towards such belligerent, destructive and unlawful Israeli policies and practices and act to bring an end to these policies and practices. Adoption by the Security Council of the draft resolution (S/2011/24) before it in regard to illegal Israeli settlements would surely contribute in this regard, sending the proper and strong message to the Israeli Government that such illegal policies and actions will no longer be tolerated by the international community. At the same time, the international community must not waver in its calls for a halt to all other illegal

policies and practices, including those committed by illegal Israeli settlers. The principles of international law and human rights demand this, as does the search for and realization of peace in the region.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 383 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 28 January 2011 (A/ES-10/510-S/2011/42), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations